[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, we shall take up Matters under Rule 377.

Prof. Om Pal Singh 'Nidar'.

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record except what Prof. Om Pal Singh 'Nidar' says.

.....*(Interruptions)**

[Translation]

If you have any special problem, you see the Hon'ble Speaker.

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You sit down. How can I call you to speak ? I donot know even the matter? You meet the Hon'ble Speaker and tell him about your problems. He has not given me any instruction?

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You meet him tomorrow.

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13 .34 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

(i) Need to increase Import Duty on Newsprint to save indigenous paper mills from closure

[Translation]

PROF. OMPAL SINGH 'NIDAR' (Jalesar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, many indigenous paper mills have closed down as imported newsprint is purposely being sold at cheaper rates in the country. Indian newsprint is available at the rate of Rs. 22.23 per Kg., whereas the same type of newsprint is available in foreign countries at Rs. 30 per Kg. But the foreign capitalists are Intentionally selling their newsprint at the rate of Rs. 15-16 per Kg. Government mills such as Nepa Nagar Paper Mills, Khandwa and some private paper mills have closed down as a result thereof.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to increase the import duty on foreign newsprint so as to enable our industry to face the competition of foreign newsprint industry and all mills including Nepa Mill could be revived and the labourers could be paid their wages without delay.

(ii) Need to take steps for Protection of Medicinal Herbs in Gumala District of Bihar

SHRI LALIT ORAON (Lohardaga) : Mr. Charirman, Sir, the medicinal herbs and plants are on the verge of extinction because of indiscriminate felling of trees and unscrupulous smugglers have eye on them in the districts which have been identified as the most backward districts of Bihar. The local citizens are much concerned over the extinction of these herbs which have been traditionally used for treatment of various diseases. The forest department has neither initiated any positive action to preserve these plants nor is concerned about it. You should know that in this forest covered district many types of herbs like Jangli safed Haldi, Arjun, Ghoravach, Shatawar, Gorakhmundi, Nagarmotha, Harjora, Meda, Karher, Inderjo, Kapoorni, are found in abundance. These herbs have the property to cure fever, jaundice, orthopaedic gynaecological, paeditric diseases and diabeties easily and successfully in traditional manner. The situation has assumed serious proportion due to felling of trees, non implementation of various schemes, increasing population and growing activities of smugglers and as a result thereof it has became quite difficult even to find the general herbs such as 'Aola', 'Harra', 'Bahera' etc. Even after smuggling of hundreds of trucks of 'Meda Chhal' no proper action has been taken against the smugglers active in Jaldega, Palkot, Kolibara, Simdega, Bano, Basia, Bharno, Sisai or Kamdara areas during the last two or three years.

The Central Government is, therefore, requested to take some concrete measures for protection of about 100 species of these medicinal herbs which are on the verge of extinction in the said area.

(iii) Need to entrust maintenance work of National Highway No. 52 between Balipara and Jonai in the North Bank of Assam to the Directorate General of Border Roads

[English]

SHRI ISWAR PRASANNA HAZARIKA (Tezpur) : The National Highway No. 52 running through four border districts of Assam's North Bank providing access to Arunchal and Chinese borders is of vital strategic importance to the country. Presently the highway is in a virtually dilapidated state, partly because of inundation and erosion during rains and floods and partly because little or no maintenance was undertaken by the State PWD during the last couple of years. A few bridges on NH 52, like Solengi near Gohpur have remained perpetually under incomplete construction.

In view of the above and considering the utmost importance of NH 52 close to strategic borders it would be in the best interest of all concerned to transfer the responsibility of maintenance of the highway to the Directorate General Border Roads. The DGBR is already mobillsed and working successfully in the vicinity for the last three decades and it would be well within its capability to undertake this additional responsibility.

The Shukla Committee to suggest measures to bridge the infrastructure gaps in the North East appointed by the Prime Minister has recommended only recently that the maintenance of NH 52 between Balipara to Jonai should be entrusted to DGBR, a view subsequently endorsed by the Standing Committee on Home Affairs of this Parliament.

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* Not recorded.

I would, therefore, urge the Minister of Surface Transport to act immediately on the above recommendation and entrust to the Directorate General of Border Roads the responsibility of maintenance of NH 52 between Balipara and Jonal in the North Bank of Assam.

(iv) **Need to take steps to check illegal mining of coal in the country**

[Translation]

PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA (Samastipur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, After nationalisation of Coal mines, some small mines were abandoned by declaring them unprofitable but illegal mining has been continuing in these mines as a result of which the Government is suffering losses as also ecological imbalance is being caused in the region due to unscientific mining. Many accident have occurred in these mines due to hazardous mining.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government that these mines should be handed over to the state Government so that these coal mines could be exploited to provide benefit to the state.

(v) **Need to grant more functional Autonomy to Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited**

[English]

SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE (Ratnagiri) : As part of liberalisation scheme, the Government has set up Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL). The Disinvestment Commission, in its third report, has nailed the bureaucratic and administrative controls of the Department of Telecommunication (DOT) which plague the working of the MTNL, particularly when private competition rides high in Delhi and Mumbai basic telecom circles. The Commission has expressed the opinion that the linkages between the DOT and the MTNL need to be dismantled so that the MTNL could function with maximum efficiency and fetch best possible price in the next tranche of disinvestment. The DOT should stop treating the MTNL as its own extension unit. Further, the MTNL should be vested with maximum autonomy and corporate powers in their management and functioning to enable it to fulfil their new role in the telecom area.

I request the Government to implement the recommendation of the Disinvestment Commission in relation to the MTNL on a top priority basis.

(vi) **Need to provide Civic Amenities to residents of Union Territory of Chandigarh**

[Translation]

SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN (Chandigarh) : Mr. Chairman Sir, thousand of people in the Union Territory of Chandigarh are living in their own houses constructed outside the Lal Dora land of villages. Similarly thousands of people are living in slum clusters in the city. Out of the total population of 7-8 lakhs as many as one lakh persons have not been provided electricity and water connections. The basic amenities like drinking water, roads and sewerage are also not available there. These people are struggling since long to get these amenities.

Not only this, some officers of the Chandigarh administration are pursuing the policy of demolishing such houses in some parts of the city. During the last few days some pucca houses have also been demolished in labour colony, Shanti Nagar, Manimajra, Shakti Nagar colony sector 41-A, and sector 37 including Palsora Colony without serving any proper notice resulting loss of property worth lakhs of rupees. Such activities causes resentment among people.

This year we are celebrating 50th year i.e. golden jubilee of our independence. Therefore, it is imperative for the Union Government to make efforts to remove injustice being meted out to every citizen on this occasion.

At the end I demand from Union Government that basic amenities like electricity, water, sewerage and ration cards should be provided immediately to each citizen living in Chandigarh irrespective of the fact they live in village, colony or any other part of the city. Further policy of demolishing the constructed houses should be banned and where houses have been demolished illegally, compensation should be paid to the owners of such houses and action should be taken against the guilty officers.

(vii) **Need to take steps to check incidents of burning alive of people due to practising of sorcery in Andhra Pradesh**

[English]

SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY (Nizamabad) : Sir, the incidence of burning alive of people accused of practising sorcery is on the increase in the district of Nizamabad in Andhra Pradesh, putting the civilised society to shame. Not only the alleged practitioners of sorcery are the victims of the bizarre murders, but the Naxalites, police informers and highway robbers are also meeting with the same fate.

Sir, the Kammanapally incident which took place in April, 1977 claimed the lives of three persons, including an aged woman. The gruesome practice was being adopted by the villagers to settle scores. Seventeen persons, including five women and a girl were roasted alive in the district of Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh during the last five years. On an average, three persons are becoming victims of this shameful and aboriginal practice. Even in this computer era, several people, particularly the rural folk, strongly believe that black magic and sorcery could cause psychological and physical problems. They also believe that if goddesses get angry, the villagers would be affected with diseases like cholera, small pox and so on. They also tend to believe that sorcery and witchcraft was the reason behind fire accidents and natural calamities.

I urge the Union Government that steps should be taken or the State Government of Andhra Pradesh should be